

Senate Committee. Shields, Beller and Gauldin all reported that Babbitt underwent several hours of mock question and answer sessions, which were videotaped.<sup>677</sup>

Babbitt said recently that he had worked with speech coaches previously during his career, but not in connection with testimony before Congress as Interior Secretary. He stated that in preparation for his House Committee testimony, he was given advice to try to make statements which would be quotable “sound bite[s]” favorable to him and the Department and he followed that advice:

And by the time that hearing is over, I had said, “it was the right decision, made for the right reasons, in the right way,” at least twenty times. That was the message.<sup>678</sup>

In Babbitt’s testimony before the House Committee, he persisted in arguing that his letters to Thompson and McCain were consistent and truthful. He maintained that “the context of the two letters was different and accounts for the different language in the documents.”<sup>679</sup> He also repeated his Senate testimony that he had no recollection of making a comment to Eckstein about political contributions by Indians. Babbitt denied White House and DNC intervention in DOI’s affairs, and he made several statements about aspects of the decision-making process

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<sup>677</sup>The tapes reveal no admissions by the Secretary that he intended to mislead Sen. McCain when he wrote to him, and no statements that the decision was improperly influenced. Similarly, there are no admissions in these tapes that Babbitt planned or intended to testify falsely or deceptively before the House committee. The tapes contain numerous examples of Babbitt practicing and being coached to provide a statement and responses to questions before a body he expected to be hostile to him.

<sup>678</sup>Babbitt G.J. Test. at 269-70.

<sup>679</sup>Babbitt House Test. at 773.